

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /057 W
-----039103 222236Z /66

R 221441Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4072
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4665

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY, US
SUBJECT: SYRIAN PRESS SEES LITTLE GOOD COMING OUT OF
WASHINGTON

SUMMARY: WHILE STICKING TO ITS POLICY OF PLAYING DOWN
BEGIN VISIT, SYRIAN PRESS CITES NUMEROUS QUOTATIONS COMING
OUT OF WASHINGTON WHICH LEAVE LITTLE ROOM FOR SYRIAN

OPTIMISM. SYRIANS SEEM TO BE RELYING EXTENSIVELY ON
ISRAELI MEDIA FOR REPORTS ON VISIT AND OBVIOUS TONE OF
ISRAELI GLEE RANKLES DEEPLY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SYRIAN PRESS CONTINUES ITS LEAD HEADLINE TREATMENT
OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION WHILE INFORMING ITS READERS OF
THE RESULTS OF BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. AL-BAATH,
JULY 22, HIGHLIGHTS THE FOLLOWING POINTS: A. BEGIN SAYS
HE WILL "RETURN TO 'OCCUPIED PALESTINE' FROM WASHINGTON
BEARING GOOD NEWS." B. VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE CONFIRMED
THAT "US-ISRAELI RELATIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN BETTER AT ANY
TIME IN THE PAST THAN THEY ARE NOW." C. SECRETARY VANCE
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SAID THAT "THE TRIP OF BEGIN TO THE US WAS A MORE DAZZLING
SUCCESS THAN HAD BEEN EXPECTED." D. THE SECRETARY ALSO
SAID "HIS (BEGIN'S) VISIT HAS OPENED NEW VISIONS FOR
HOLDING A GENEVA CONFERENCE. THE SECRETARY EXPRESSED HIS
HOPE THAT SOME PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS RELATING TO THE WORK OF
THIS CONFERENCE WILL BE RESOLVED DURING THE TOUR WHICH HE
WILL UNDERTAKE AT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT MONTH IN THE MIDDLE

EAST. E. HAARETZ SAYS THAT "PRESIDENT CARTER HAD DECIDED TO GIVE ISRAEL AMERICAN HELP IN PRODUCING 'ISRAELI TANKS.'" F. FRENCH NEWS AGENCIES SAY THE US HAS "DECIDED TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO ISRAEL'S REQUEST FOR 100 ADVANCED AMERICAN FIGHTERS OF THE F-16 TYPE." G. "JAMES ABOUREZK SEVERELY CRITICIZED THE TERRORIST - BEGIN - DURING A CLOSED SESSION OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS."

2. EDITORIAL COMMENT IN THE SYRIAN PRESS IS DIVIDED BETWEEN THE LEBANESE SITUATION AND BEGIN'S VISIT. EDITORIALS IN TISHRIN AND AL-BAATH BOTH FOCUS ON NEW US ARMS AID TO ISRAEL AND, NOT SURPRISINGLY, SEE NOTHING IN THE NEWS OUT OF WASHINGTON AND ISRAEL CALLING FOR OPTIMISM (QUOTATIONS CONTAINED IN USIS MEDIA REACTION CABLE, JULY 22).

3. COMMENT: SYRIAN PRESS SEEMS TO BE RELYING EXTENSIVELY ON KOL ISRAEL AND ISRAELI NEWSPAPERS FOR NEWS OF BEGIN'S WASHINGTON TRIP. STORIES ARE FREQUENTLY SOURCED TO ISRAELI MEDIA. ISRAELI EXPRESSIONS OF EEP SATISFACTION WITH VISIT ARE UNNERVING TO SYRIANS. SYRIAN MEDIA SEE THE ISRAELI POSITION AS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE ON QUESTIONS OF PALESTINIANS AND WEST BANK AND TAKE THE POSITION THAT BY GIVING NEW ARMS AID TO SIRAE, US HAS PUT ITS IMPRIMATUR ON CONTINUED ISRAELI INTRANSIGNECE ON THESE TWO SUBJECTS. PRESS COMMENT NONETHHTLESS CONTINUES TO BE UNUSALLY SUBDUED
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GIVEN PERCEIVED PROVOCATION. IT IS CLEAR THAT SYRIAN LEADER-SHIP WANTS TO HOLD THE LINE UNTIL SECRETARY'S VISIT.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770262-1127
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770730/aaaaazpw.tel
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Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1782066
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN PRESS SEES LITTLE GOOD COMING OUT OF WASHINGTON SUMMARY: WHILE STICKING TO ITS POLICY OF PLAYING D
TAGS: PINT, OVIP, SOPN, SY, US, IS, (BEGIN, MENAHEM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9cbdea65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009